



SINGLES

The Challenge for Brands to Understand their Consumption through Social Networks in Spain

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ABSTRACT

Times have changed and we are experiencing a real demographic and technological revolution, in which the single person, also known as the single, is not only a synonym for free, happy and rich, but also has a high consumption of Internet and social networks. In Spain, the growth of this social group has turned it into a community with consumer behaviour that is relevant for companies. The analysis of communication and marketing strategies, especially those related to online shopping and social media consumption, is key for brands to connect with this target group and offer them what they need.

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1. Introduction

Singles have become a community with specific consumer behaviour that is particularly relevant to companies due to the growth of this social group. According to the National Statistics Institute, 36% of the Spanish population is single. For the first time in our country, the number of single people exceeds the number of married people (Cadena Ser, October 2023). In 2037, there will be 6.5 million single households, almost 30% of the total. These are the households that will grow the most over the next fifteen years, while four-person households will show negative growth (INE, 2022, 13 October). These data contrast with the reality of 50 years ago, when 90% of Spanish families were married and 75% of them had children (Bernad, 2004).

Singlehood is not associated with the lifelong "bachelor", commonly known as "bachelorette", with the negative connotations that have traditionally been associated with the term. And that have traditionally weighed on social categories linked to singleness, generally associated with personal failure or misfortune (Martín, 2021). Today, however, perceptions of couple relationships have changed, encompassing a wider range of sentimental situations (divorced, widowed, separated), and households have gone from four or more people to three, two, one or single-parent households.

In 2022, the number of people living alone in Spain will represent 10.7% of the total population (INE, 2022, 13 October), and if we add to this the decline in marriage and divorce rates that is affecting the whole of the European Union, a future with a high number of single-person households is predicted. Spain has always been the country with the highest number of divorces, and after the pandemic it fell to eleventh place (Triviño, 2023). In 2022, there were 6.4% fewer divorces than in previous years (INE, 2023, 13 July), although in the second quarter of 2023, 24,404 annulment cases were registered, 0.1% more than in 2022 (Poder Judicial, 2023). This is no coincidence; according to experts, it is due to a decline in the number of marriages. Marriage is not necessarily a goal in life and has been replaced by other forms of cohabitation.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Who are the Singles?

There is a great deal of debate surrounding the concept of the single person. Some view them as unhappy, eccentric individuals who are unable to find a partner due to their own shortcomings. Others regard them as enviable, as they are able to pursue their own interests without the constraints of a partner. This raises the question of whether singles are single by choice or out of necessity.

According to various sociologists and philosophers, there are three factors that explain the phenomenon of chosen singleness (Galafate, 2017):

1. The lack of work-life balance. According to Francesc Torralba, the reconciliation of work and family life is a complex process, which is why many people prefer to live alone.
2. Liquid relationships. According to philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, commitment or solid ties are a source of anxiety. "Sporadic relationships are preferred to preserve independence," notes Torralba.
3. Self-realisation. For many people, having a partner is an obstacle because their work life is very intense, and they need to have space and time for it. They prioritise the pace of life they have, and it is incompatible with what is meant by having a partner.

People who decide to be alone, who do not feel lonely, lead a rhythm of life that is incompatible with having a stable partner or forming a family. Some individuals prefer to develop a professional career, travel extensively, return home, and pursue their own interests without the obligation to justify their actions to others. This lifestyle can lead to feelings of satisfaction and personal fulfilment. However, there are also those who desire a partner but encounter difficulty in finding one.

The decision to remain single or to enter into a relationship is a matter of personal priorities, not a reflection of selfishness, as David Lanzas, a psychologist, has observed. While one may desire the company of a partner, it is not necessarily a matter of urgent necessity. The notion that a single

individual is selfish or lacks the capacity to develop their affections is demonstrably false and irrational (Galafate, 2017). As with marriage and childbearing, happiness is not necessarily correlated with these life events, particularly for women. This is supported by Catherine Gray (2019).

The term "single" encompasses both those who have chosen to remain single and those who are currently single by circumstance, or those who anticipate a change in their marital status in the near future. Consequently, in the context of advertising and marketing, the single individual is perceived as an autonomous entity, typically residing alone, irrespective of whether they are single, divorced or widowed, and above the age of 18. They are assumed to possess a certain degree of financial independence, although this may vary considerably. Nevertheless, they are still able to engage in leisure activities such as socialising with friends, watching films or playing video games at home. The concept of a "home" culture has become particularly entrenched in the wake of the pandemic.

Once the term has been defined, it should be clarified that there are other situations that include this term, without being so (Sebastián & Martínez, 2010, p.65). These include:

1. Divorced people living together with children.
2. Widowers with children who return home, either because they have divorced or because they have become independent, and their financial situation prevents them from paying rent and supporting themselves.
3. LAT (living apart together) couples who do not live in the same flat, but usually share weekends with their stable partners. The latest data indicate that the individuals who report the most happiness are those in LAT relationships (De Santos, 2022). This is due, on the one hand, to the individual freedom and personal space that comes with a committed relationship.

Despite criticism, this modality continues to increase, not only among singles but also among divorced and widowed people. This is because it is difficult to form new couples with children from previous relationships, to reconcile work and social responsibilities with life as a couple, and so forth. The psychologist Francisco Hidalgo (2024) outlines several advantages of the LAT couple model, including a reduction in daily tensions, the preservation of the magic in the relationship, the quality of time shared, economic independence, and the strengthening of trust. Additionally, he highlights the disadvantages and challenges associated with this type of couple. These include socio-economic conditions, a fear of commitment, a lack of confidence to move forward in the relationship, an emotional attachment to the family of origin and the habit of loneliness.

Other studies have identified the following five types of non-cohabiting couples in Spain (BBVA Foundation, 2022):

1. Non-cohabiting couples represent 25.4% and are considered too young to live together.
2. Non-cohabiting couples comprises those who do not cohabit for economic reasons (25.7%).
3. A further 7% of non-cohabiting couples wish to remain in this arrangement in order to maintain their independence.
4. Those who are not prepared to cohabit (7.1%).
5. A further 13% of couples do not live together due to work-related circumstances.

The aforementioned circumstances illustrate that not all singles are identical. The most recent survey of living conditions in Spain indicates that relative poverty has increased in single-person households formed by a woman (28.7% in 2022), while in those formed by a man it has decreased (22.1% in 2022). Households with a single person aged 65 and over account for 28.3% and households with a single person under 65 for 23.5% (INE, 2023).

Ultimately, being single is neither superior nor inferior to being married; it is simply different. However, living alone is more expensive than living with a partner. This is corroborated by a multitude of studies that demonstrate that our society is structured in a manner that is conducive to cohabitation. One need only consider taxation, which benefits families over individuals who live alone (Otero, 2021). The exorbitant cost of housing and rents renders it almost impossible for

individuals to afford to pay for these expenses independently (Barnés, 2021). MacNicol (2019) posits that being single affects rent, bills, health insurance, and that we live in a capitalist society that orients couples. As there are numerous circumstances within this segment, there is also a wide typology of singles according to their personal characteristics. "Demanding, convinced, self-sufficient, rebellious, itinerant, falsely resigned, selfish, resentful, long-suffering and timorous" (Saez, 2024).

It is evident that whether or not singles identify with any of the aforementioned categories, they constitute a rapidly expanding demographic with distinct consumption and behavioural patterns. They are also projected to be the most rapidly growing demographic in the future, influencing consumer lifestyles and creating business opportunities for companies that cater to their needs.

For instance, individuals between the ages of 30 and 45 tend to prioritize quality and novelty, whereas those between 45 and 65 exhibit a tendency toward brand loyalty, seeking convenience and comfort. Those over the age of 65, on the other hand, tend to prioritize price, comfort, and proximity (Sebastián & Martínez, 2010).

For a number of years, companies have been targeting singles because they have observed that this is a segment that is growing in number and that they can therefore market to with greater confidence. In terms of consumption, it is true that a multi-person household consumes more, but singles consume more for themselves and consume more leisure. Some researchers have commented on this. "There is a very high tendency, in general in society, and it is reflected in these singles, to enjoy a life considered as one of freedom for a longer period of time" (Otero, 2021).

A considerable body of research indicates that Spanish society is not yet prepared to live independently. This is beneficial, as it ensures that some sociability is maintained. Indeed, experts have highlighted the growing problem of loneliness in the future, suggesting that maintaining some degree of social interaction may be a valuable strategy. "It is important to recognise that while being single can offer certain freedoms and benefits, it can also come with challenges that affect the growth and emotional depth of the relationship" (Hidalgo, 2024). Indeed, a study carried out for El País shows that people under 25 feel more lonely than those over 65, as well as reflecting a lack of economic resources and spending more hours of the day on the Internet, social networks and Internet forums. The economic situation also has an impact on health and loneliness (Junquera & Clemente, 2023). Consequently, those who have greater financial resources will have greater opportunities for social interaction, whereas those who lack such resources will have to rely more heavily on new technologies (Barnes, 2021)..

2.2. Consumer Behaviour on the Internet and Social Networks

The proportion of unmarried individuals in their 40s is increasing at an exponential rate, as evidenced by data indicating that the percentage of never-married singles in this age group has doubled (Wavemaker, 2022).

The use of the Internet and social networks in Spain is high, although there is still a percentage of the population that does not use any social network due to lack of interest. A total of 85% of Spanish Internet users between the ages of 12 and 74 utilise social networks, equating to 30 million individuals. There is a higher penetration rate among women, with a particularly high prevalence among those aged between 18 and 24. WhatsApp remains the most widely used social network, followed by Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Notwithstanding, Telegram, LinkedIn and TikTok are the networks that exhibited the greatest growth in comparison to 2022 (IAB Spain, 2023). In terms of single individuals, the average daily time spent online is 3.75 hours, with social networks, games, music and audio applications, and dating apps representing the most frequently used applications on mobile phones. A total of 65% of respondents indicated that they connect to social networks on a daily basis. The most frequently used social networks were Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Although the majority of users primarily utilise these platforms for social interaction with their friends, it is evident that a significant proportion of users are also utilising them for the purpose of seeking romantic relationships. In fact, the proportion of users who are seeking romantic relationships on these platforms is 164% higher than the proportion of the total population (Lastra, 2020).

The transformation of consumption behaviour on social networks can be observed in the context of significant changes occurring in the private sphere of our country. Consumption patterns differ

among single individuals, with new technologies contributing to the diversification of affective-sexual relationships. This is evidenced by a sociological study conducted with the support of the BBVA Foundation (2022), which indicates that the utilisation of digital networks and friends exerts a more pronounced influence among the single population and those with fewer children. As information technologies facilitate an exponential increase in interactions, contacts, identities and feelings, it is evident that they have become an integral part of modern society.

The primary functions of social networks are for entertainment (80%), interaction (65%), and information (54%). The accounts most frequently followed by social network users are those of friends, family, and acquaintances (96%), followed by influencers (51%) and brand profiles (43%) (IAB Spain, 2023). Some studies have indicated that the sharing of physical space may be losing relevance in favour of "being in relationship or communication". Consequently, the convergence of face-to-face and digital relationships between its members will give rise to a novel form of digital love (BBVA Foundation, 2022). The advent of social media has transformed the manner in which individuals seek romantic partners. Indeed, a significant proportion of men (31%) now utilize social networks to identify potential romantic partners with whom they can engage in regular sexual intercourse (BBVA Foundation, 2022).

This demonstrates that social networking presents both new opportunities and new risks. However, this revolution is irreversible and is affecting all aspects of family, personal and couple life. It is imperative to adjust to a novel context that appears to be evolving in a forward direction.

A study conducted by the company Finetwork has revealed that one of the most prevalent trends in recent years is the use of the Internet for flirting. The study found that over 27% of singles surveyed indicated that they prefer to look for love online, with 10.3% stating that their preferred method is through dating apps and 17.1% preferring to flirt through social networks. However, it is evident that a considerable number of individuals utilise these applications and social networks to meet new people and engage in leisure activities (Europa Press, 2023).

Conversely, empirical evidence suggests that the number of individuals following brands on social media has declined slightly compared to 2022 (43% in 2023 vs. 48% in 2022). Nevertheless, the intensity of those who follow brands on social media has increased, with 45% of individuals reporting this behaviour in 2023. The "entertainment, culture and media" and "travel, transport and tourism" sectors continue to be the most followed (IAB Spain, 2023).

It is true that a brand that does not have a presence on social networks does not alter its trust in users. However, there has been an increase in the number of people who say they trust brands with a profile on social networks (37%) (IAB Spain, 2023). Indeed, Spanish singles are particularly loyal to the brands they like, placing a premium on quality, price, and brand. They are more likely to purchase than the general population, with a preference for electronics, clothing, sporting goods, books, and cosmetics (Lastra, 2020). Consequently, brands seeking to connect with singles must prioritize social media engagement, as singles utilize social networks more extensively (Lastra, 2017) and exhibit heightened trust in brands. This can be evidenced by the fact that in 2023, Ouigo celebrated the second edition of "San Solterín" by calling on singles through the company's social networks to participate in a journey with lots of love to reach the selected capital city where other activities awaited them. The action reached a cumulative audience of 16 million (MarketingNews, 2023).

With regard to the use of social media for advertising purposes, users continue to exhibit a high level of reluctance, with 51% expressing a negative opinion. Concurrently, the number of individuals who express a preference for advertising content aligned with their interests is on the decline. However, 40% of respondents indicated that the advertising they encountered met their expectations (IAB Spain, 2023). In light of these findings, Banco Santander has initiated virtual campaigns targeting young people and singles. "Singles in particular spend a considerable amount of money on travel, and we are a means of accessing that through the credit card" (Lippo, 2020).

The role of social networks in the process of purchasing a product or service is primarily to provide information (44%), assist in comparing alternatives, and facilitate commentary or sharing of the purchase. Consequently, 42% of users express a positive valuation of the practice of other individuals leaving comments on products and services, while 45% indicate that these comments are sufficiently influential to prompt a purchase (IAB Spain, 2023). General Motors is seeking to

identify narratives and scenarios that resonate with singles, with a particular focus on the purchasing process and the specific stages of their lives. Consequently, the company is dedicated to a digital strategy that prioritises online advertising, content generation, payments and organic social media (Lippo, 2020).

Although an increasing number of advertisers are targeting singles or childless couples, those seeking to connect with this demographic must do so through everyday situations, proximity and empathy. Furthermore, the objective is to generate engagement, foster brand loyalty, facilitate sales, and provide excellent customer service. It is of paramount importance to avoid overlooking this target, which is frequently misrepresented. In order to capture the attention of this target audience, it is necessary to ascertain their interests. This can be achieved through effective communication and marketing, which enables the correct focus to be placed on this growing segment.

3. Objectives and Methodology

3.1. Objectives

The following study aims to investigate a number of objectives in a sample of the single population in Spain. The main objectives are as follows:

1. To define the term single in order to ascertain who this social group is.
2. To differentiate between different types of singles, by gender, age and social class.
3. To ascertain the consumption behaviour of singles on the Internet and social networks.
4. To identify future trends in the use of social networks by this social group.

To this end, this article aims to answer the following research questions:

- Q1. What is the image that society and singles have of themselves and their lifestyle?
- Q2. How do singles feel about their use of the Internet and social media, and how do they perceive brands?

3.2. Methodology

The results of the desk research, which analysed academic, professional and advertising sector publications related to the object of study, show that there is little academic literature on singles and no scientific publications that link singles with the consumption of social networks and the Internet. There are comprehensive studies on social networks, but they do not differentiate between the usage patterns of singles and non-singles. However, differences by age, gender, education, occupation, etc. do emerge (IAB Spain, 2023; The Social Media Family, 2022). There is a wealth of literature on the subject of singles, including works by Alcázar (2009), Berndad (2004), Gray (2019), Martín (2021), McNicol (2019), Sebastián & Martínez (2010), Sebastián (2017), and Seguí (2007).

To reinforce the theoretical framework and increase the validity of the research, a pilot self-administered online questionnaire was carried out. The survey was developed using SurveyMonkey, which allowed us to collect information in a clear and simple way for subsequent analysis. The online survey offers a number of advantages, including speed, improved response rates due to the inclusion of audiovisual elements, and reduced costs when compared to self-administered surveys (Díaz de Rada, 2012).

The questionnaire comprised 29 questions, each related to a specific objective or research question.

Table 1 illustrates the issues raised in the questionnaire and their alignment with the research questions.

Table 1. Correlation between research questions and questionnaire items

Research questions	Guide to questions in the questionnaire
What is the image that society and singles have of themselves and their lifestyles? (Q.1)	<p>What do you understand by single?</p> <p>What types of sigles do you think are most prevalent in society?</p> <p>What do you do in your spare time?</p> <p>Situation you identify with</p> <p>Age, sex, education level, income level</p>
How do singles feel about their use of the Internet and social networks, and how do they perceive brands? (Q.2)	<p>Use and consumption of the Internet and social networks.</p> <p>Products and services you usually buy.</p> <p>Type of purchases you make.</p> <p>Important aspects when shopping on the Internet</p> <p>Brands you follow on the Internet and social networks.</p> <p>Advertising they carry out and whether you think it is appropriate.</p> <p>Apps that you use for networking, making friends, flirting, travelling, health and wellness.</p> <p>In the future, what use do you think you will make of social networks?</p>

Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

This technique has been selected for its ability to obtain and process data in a timely and efficient manner, while also being well-suited to the collection of information on the subject under study. The questionnaire is designed to gather structured information about the target group and the variables under study.

The research was conducted using a non-probabilistic sample of individuals residing in Spain. A total of 200 individuals completed the questionnaire between 2 and 23 February 2024. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. A total of 200 responses were obtained, with 60% of respondents identifying as women, 38% as men, and the remainder preferring not to say. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to over 65 years old, with 89% having completed university studies and income levels between 12,000 and over 6,000 euros per year.

The sample size ensured the reliability of the research methodology, enabling the collection of valuable insights that will inform future brand strategies targeting this rapidly expanding demographic.

4. Analysis and Results

The responses obtained from the pilot questionnaire completed by the selected sample (200 individuals) are presented below, providing pertinent information to the research questions posed.

4.1. Society's and Singles' Image of Themselves and Their Lifestyles

The initial question posed to the respondents was to define the term "single." All but one of the participants were able to articulate that they meant a single person, in one way or another. However, the attributions made to the term "single" are noteworthy. Many respondents associated it not only with a single person, but also with individuals who are single by choice, content with that status, lively, and without family ties or burdens. Furthermore, the term is associated with a number of positive connotations, including freedom, independence, sociability, and autonomy. It is even classified as an upper middle-class status. Some participants indicated that being single is a long-term condition, with individuals choosing to remain single for the rest of their lives.

Table 2 shows the most relevant responses in this respect. It is important to note that the data has been cross-referenced with the age of the respondents, yet no discernible pattern has emerged. There is no particular age range that is consistently associated with the term "single." Rather, the responses are distributed evenly across all age groups.

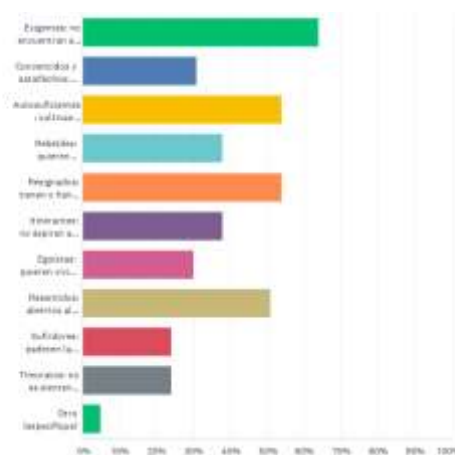
Table 2: Top responses on associations with the term single.

Outstanding answers related to independence and freedom.
Independent and not tied to anything or anyone.
He likes freedom.
Self-employed, independent, without a steady partner.
Independent, with initiative, sociable, eager for new things.
Single: individual, free.
Single, independent, current, digital.
Independent person.
People without family responsibilities.
Single who wants to meet people to have some kind of relationship, but without being tied to any person.
Outstanding responses related to liking to be single or being single.
Single without having to stop being single.
She is a person who likes to live and be alone.
Single person with an individualistic approach to life.
A person without a partner who is content with this situation.
Single who wants to be single.
A person who is single and is not looking to be in a relationship at the moment, but rather to be at ease with his/her life, without ties.
Single person, who wants nothing to do with anyone and is not looking for a partner, only to socialise.
Single person who is at ease and comfortable in that situation.
A person who has chosen to remain single throughout his or her life, without an emotional partner.
A single person who lives on the move.
Outstanding responses related to age or standard of living.
Unmarried, upper middle class, middle-aged, no family project.
A person who is over 30 and has been without a steady partner for some time.
A single person, usually separated, who is past his or her youthful prime.

Source: own elaboration based on data collected on the SurveyMonkey platform, 2024.

The second question was posed to ascertain which types of single individuals respondents consider to be the most prevalent in society. Figure 1 illustrates the results, with "Demanding: they cannot find someone who lives up to their expectations" emerging as the most prevalent response, at 64% of responses. This is followed by "Self-sufficient: they have many hobbies and do not need a partner, they find it complex and problematic," and "Resigned: they have or have had unrequited love affairs." A total of 54% of respondents indicated that they do not rule out the possibility of forming a romantic partnership. To a lesser extent, 51% of respondents identified with the "Resentful: open to love, but with a lot of reservations due to multiple previous romantic failures" classification. The remaining classifications exhibit a lower level of representation, as illustrated in the accompanying graph.

Graphic 1. Types of singles most found in society according to respondents.



Source: graph extracted from the SurveyMonkey platform based on the data collected, 2024.

The responses to the third question indicate that non-singles tend to engage in leisure activities primarily within the confines of their homes, with meeting friends and playing sports being the most popular choices. Other popular activities include travelling, going to the cinema or theatre, and a range of other pursuits. In the case of singles, the most frequently cited leisure activities are meeting friends, followed by activities at home, sport, travelling and going to the cinema or theatre.

The participants were then asked to indicate which of the situations they identified with. A total of 22% of respondents indicated that they were in a relationship but did not reside with their partner. This is followed, in equal parts, by those who live alone and do not have a partner and those who live with their partner and children, with 21% of respondents falling into this category. The figure of those who live with a partner (18%) is the next most relevant, leaving the other responses with lower percentages.

Graphic 2. Situations with which respondents identify.



Source: graph extracted from the SurveyMonkey platform based on the data collected, 2024.

4.2. Singles' Views on Internet and Social Media Consumption and their Perceptions of Brands

Subsequently, the utilisation of social networks and the Internet among the respondents was evaluated. The responses of those who are not single indicate a higher use of social networks, with 63.24% of respondents reporting greater engagement with these platforms. The remaining 36.76% of respondents claim to use the Internet more broadly, encompassing a range of activities. There is no significant discrepancy when examining respondents who indicate that they are not in a partnership. Specifically, 57.14% of respondents utilize social networks to a greater extent, while 42.86% utilize the Internet to a greater extent.

In light of the aforementioned findings, we proceeded to inquire about the specific manner in which respondents utilize the Internet. Figure 1 presents a word cloud displaying the most frequently used terms among all respondents. These include search, work, shopping, solving doubts, and watching films and news. A greater number of responses related to the management of trips, shopping, and various leisure and entertainment options were observed among unmarried participants.

Figure 1. Word cloud on Internet use



Source: graph extracted from the SurveyMonkey platform based on the data collected, 2024.

The survey indicated that 44% of non-singles engage in online shopping on a sporadic basis, 28% do so monthly, and 26% do so on a weekly basis. In this regard, the shopping habits of singles are strikingly similar to those of non-singles. Upon analysis of the data according to age, it becomes evident that the

24 to 44 age bracket exhibits a greater propensity for online shopping, with respondents indicating that they utilize the Internet for this purpose on a monthly or weekly basis. This differs from the general average data, with a notable change in response when looking at the 45 to over 65 age brackets, where occasional use of internet shopping is more common. In 10% of cases, there is no evidence of such usage.

When asked about the products or services most frequently purchased online, clothing emerged as the most popular category (55%), followed by technology (10%), books, cosmetics, ticket purchases, household goods, travel, food, toys and sports. What are the reasons for these online purchases? The majority of respondents selected the first option as their primary preference: "because it is more convenient for them", followed by "lack of time", "a taste for buying these types of items online" and, lastly, because they consider it "more reliable". The data remains consistent when examining only those without a partner. The respondents were asked to identify the aspects they consider most important when shopping online. Those with a partner placed greater importance on price, followed by quality, with information, time and comments all receiving equal consideration. In the case of singles, price and quality are of equal importance, followed by information provided, time and user reviews.

Amazon is the most popular website for online shopping, with 63.92% of respondents indicating that they use it to make purchases. Shein and AliExpress are also popular, with 15.46% and 9.28% of respondents, respectively, indicating that they use these websites to make purchases. Other clothing shops, Inditex, Vinted, Zalando, Casa del Libro, and El Corte Inglés are also popular shopping destinations.

Regarding social networks, single respondents tend to use more social platforms in their daily lives, indicating that they use these platforms more frequently for personal and professional purposes. The order of preference for social media platforms was as follows: Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn, in that order, compared to the choice of non-singles. The following social media platforms were identified as popular among the target audience: Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn.

The social network most frequently cited as the preferred platform for brand engagement is Instagram, with 45.27% of respondents indicating this as their preference. Despite the perception that many individuals do not follow any brands online, those who do follow brands cite a diverse range of categories, including clothing, luxury, food, leisure, political parties, television programmes, cosmetics, and restaurants. The primary reason for following brands is the content they publish, followed by the offers and promotions they communicate. The findings demonstrate that singles are more likely to prioritize brands that offer discounts and promotions over those who do not.

The number of positive responses to the question of whether they have discovered new brands through social networks is noteworthy, although the majority did not specify which ones. These include brands in the textile, food, leisure, and small business sectors. The majority of respondents (75%) believe that the advertising conducted by brands on social networks is satisfactory, although they acknowledge that it could be enhanced. Suggestions include reducing the intrusiveness of the ads, limiting commercial interests, providing more engaging content, utilising influencers, improving segmentation, offering discounts and promotions, incorporating more authentic narratives, reducing the frequency of ads, simplifying the format, and making them more concise.

The survey also inquired about the most popular apps for socializing with others, including apps for making friends and flirting. Graphs 3 and 4 illustrate a notable discrepancy between the two profiles surveyed. Singles indicated applications such as Tinder or Bumble in high percentages, while non-singles indicated this to a lesser extent in the case of Tinder or not at all in the case of Bumble. It is notable that the first choice of singles is also WhatsApp, in contrast to non-singles, where the favourite is Instagram.

Graphic 3. Most used applications by single respondents.



Source: graph extracted from the SurveyMonkey platform based on the data collected, 2024.

Graphic 4. Most used applications by non-single respondents.

Source: graph extracted from the SurveyMonkey platform based on the data collected, 2024.

Regarding the future use of social networks, most respondents have selected "Same" as the first option, followed by "less use" for non-singles in second place and "more use" in third place. Some respondents have indicated "no use" as well. The singles have not indicated a noticeable difference between third and fourth place regarding their future use of social networks. In any case, all respondents indicated that their future use will be consistent with their current use.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The initial findings of this study indicate that respondents associate the term "single" with several key characteristics. Although respondents all identify the term with a single person, the way they describe them deviates from the conventional notions of a "bachelor" or "bachelorette." This differs from the associations identified by Martín (2021) with failure or misfortune. In contrast to the traditional associations of the term "single," the single person is now perceived as free, independent, modern, upper middle class, and someone who enjoys their singleness and does not intend to change it. These characteristics slightly exceed those typically attributed to the single from a marketing perspective, as evidenced by the theoretical framework. Nevertheless, there is no significant distinction between the two. It is noteworthy that age was not a determining factor in respondents' perceptions of what a single person is. What responses would have been generated if, instead of inquiring about respondents' understanding of the term "single," they had been asked to define what a single person is?

This perception of singles is also evident when they are asked to identify those, they believe to be the most common in society. The first places are taken by the "Demanding" and the "Self-sufficient", that is, those who are single by choice, who do not have anyone because they do not want or do not live up to what they are looking for or need. This contrasts with the "Resigned" or "Resentful", who are single because they have not had good experiences but do want to have a partner.

The study reveals that there are differences in the way singles share their leisure time compared to non-singles. These include the time dedicated to going out with friends or the greater focus on travel or leisure. However, there is less of a change when it comes to their interests, which are shared in both cases. This is supported by recent research such as that of IPG Mediabrands (Lastra, 2020).

The first and second objectives of this study have been met, and the first research question has been answered. The theoretical framework has been expanded to include a definition of the term "single," differentiating it according to gender, age, and social class. The survey results have also been incorporated, providing insights into the general public's perceptions of what it means to be single.

There is a growing interest in tools that enable this single public to socialise more effectively. The results demonstrate that most users utilize social networks for communication with their contacts, with a slight preference for posting content. Following content of interest is the primary activity on both platforms. This preference is also evident in the social networks that singles tend to use more frequently. Among this demographic, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp are the most popular, while non-singles tend to prefer Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, or Twitter. These applications facilitate more extensive communication with other contacts.

Similarly, there is a clear preference for apps for meeting people among singles, where Tinder or Bumble are very prominent. This reflects recent data on the interest of this audience in looking for love through social networks, with 164% more users than the total population (Lastra, 2020). This is consistent with the findings presented at the beginning of this study.

The third objective has been met, and the second research question has been answered. This has revealed the main consumption behaviours of singles on the Internet and social networks, as well as the sources consulted, and the data collected in the study. Regarding the final objective, most singles indicated that they intend to continue using social networks in the future. It is noteworthy that one respondent stated that, due to uncertainty regarding the future evolution of networks, he is unable to predict the specific ways in which he will utilise them. Could it be that a better understanding of the needs of singles will help to develop new tools specifically for them in the future?

This study has revealed a lack of recent, important research on how singles use social networks and the Internet. Given their importance as a target for commercial campaigns, it is of interest to complete this information in order to gain a deeper understanding of them and reach them more effectively. For future research, it would be beneficial to expand the sample size to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the differences highlighted in the pilot questionnaire. This study contributes to the emerging research on this topic.

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This article builds on previous research conducted by the authors on the singles segment. The objective is to identify new behaviours of this target group. We would like to thank all those who have supported us with the research by completing the questionnaire, which has contributed to the strengthening of the research.

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